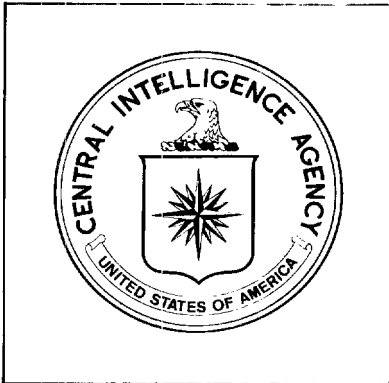


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This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Soviet Area Specialists Offer
Views on Southeast Asia

The current visit to the USSR by North Vietnam party chief Le Duan takes place against a background of increasingly good relations between Moscow and Hanoi.

Last week two high-ranking officials of the Soviet Foreign Ministry noted that the North Vietnamese are closer to Moscow than to Peking on most issues. Mikhail Kapitsa, head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's First Far East Division, and Yuriy Kuznetsov, deputy chief of the Southeast Asia Division, said they were pleased with the progress toward Vietnamese reunification, and Kuznetsov asserted that legal reunification is now merely a formality. Kapitsa acknowledged, however, that Hanoi is in an awkward position and must balance off relations with China and the USSR.

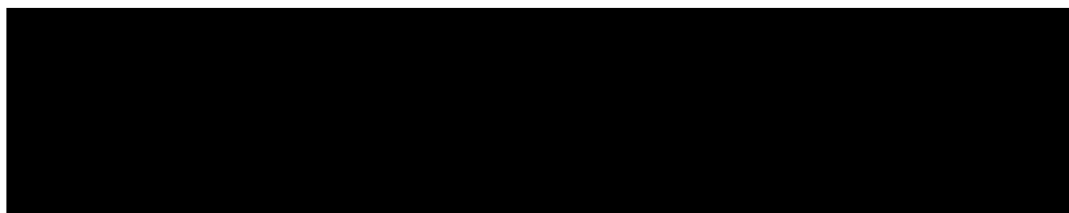
The Soviet officials came up with some critical comments on US policies toward Vietnam. Kapitsa complained that present US policies make solution of outstanding issues very difficult and serve only to nullify any influence Washington might have in Vietnam. Kuznetsov urged that the US take the initiative in normalizing its relations with Vietnam. He commented that US-Vietnamese problems need to be discussed directly, which suggests that the Soviets have been unable to persuade the North Vietnamese to take the initiative. The Soviets did not disguise their hope that the United States will resume a role in Indochina as a counter to China.

The remarks of the two Soviets indicate Moscow's relations with other Southeast Asian countries are not as smooth as those that exist with Hanoi. Kuznetsov said there will be no Soviet embassy in

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Phnom Penh in the near future. Kapitsa conceded that the Chinese currently have the dominant voice in Cambodia, but said that Peking's influence would eventually decline because of the inevitably increasing influence of the Vietnamese. Kuznetsov touched briefly on the Soviet presence in Laos, admitting that there had been an increase in the number of Soviet planes and personnel stationed there.



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Kapitsa asserted that Soviet proposals for an Asian collective security agreement could not be implemented without China, which might mean a delay of from 10 to 50 years. (CONFIDENTIAL)



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Prague Changes Line on Border Incident

Czechoslovak media have shifted to a tougher line on the border incident involving three members of a US military patrol that strayed across the Czechoslovak border on October 17.

The regime handled the incident expeditiously and released the three soldiers to West German custody within two days. A Foreign Ministry official made a mild oral representation to the US charge and remarked that "when relations had not been so good" he had seen such incidents "handled quite differently." Press coverage of the incident was limited to low-key factual reporting for the next ten days.

On October 27, however, the media reverted to their familiar strident anti-US tone with commentary that lumped the border incident with the recent helicopter exfiltration (*Staff Notes*, October 17, August 21), West German military activity along the Czechoslovak border, the Korean war, Vietnam, and the Helsinki accord. The party daily, *Rude Pravo*, said that "one could be very indulgent and describe the whole affair as an unpleasant accident, but many circumstances we witness to the west of our borders show that there is a deliberate system in operation here." Moreover, the paper asserted, the soldiers knew that the purpose of their mission was to gain "perfect knowledge of the state frontier of Czechoslovakia to be prepared for potential deployment of American units on our frontier." Prague domestic radio replayed this insinuation of aggressive designs by the US against Czechoslovakia. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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Yugoslav-Bulgarian Relations:
Is the Spirit of Helsinki Fading?

Belgrade has recently resumed its attacks on Sofia over the Macedonian issue, and has emphasized Bulgaria's role as a surrogate for Soviet interests in the Balkans. Should the polemic continue to heat up, Sofia probably will postpone the visit of Foreign Minister Mladenov to Belgrade next month.

The strongest attack appeared in the weekly Yugoslav news magazine *NIN* in an article which laid down three conditions for the success of Balkan cooperation.

- All countries must put an end to legacies of the past which outside powers have used to further their own aims.
- Each nation must represent its own interests, not those of non-Balkan states.
- National minorities must be fully recognized.

Sofia has refused to recognize the Macedonians within its borders as a separate nationality. According to Belgrade, this constitutes an implicit claim to Yugoslav Macedonia. Bulgaria has also proposed that "all interested countries"--read, the USSR--be allowed to join in the Balkan conference proposed by Greek Prime Minister Caramanlis. (It is unlikely that the Soviets would be invited.)

Other attacks were carried in the press in Skopje, the capital of Yugoslav Macedonia, and in the authoritative party daily *Borba*. The articles upbraid groups that say Bulgaria had a "decisive role" in liberating Yugoslavia during World War II, and observe that the latest issue of the Bulgarian military history journal has revived these "glaring falsifications."

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These familiar charges crop up again despite the reported agreement of Presidents Tito and Zhivkov at Helsinki to seek ways to defuse their dispute (*Staff Notes*, October 9). The current commentaries, however, make it clear that Belgrade believes the inspiration for the Bulgarian position originates in Moscow. One article contends that certain groups in Bulgaria are "assigned the role of acting against Yugoslavia" and that these groups are "encouraged to persist in something that is clearly at variance" with the official line in Sofia.

The Bulgarian leadership probably is divided on how to respond. The Bulgarian military has long been a stronghold of conservative nationalist sentiment, and many of its members must be rankled by Zhivkov's official "no comment" policy.

In an unusual move, Sofia has apparently decided to rebut some of Belgrade's charges of cultural assimilation. The Yugoslavs maintain that Bulgaria has deported "ethnic Macedonians" from the region and replaced them with ethnic "Bulgarian" residents. A recent Bulgarian news agency report on industrial development in the Blagoevgrad (Macedonian) region noted that in no other area has the labor force grown so much, and that the increase had been accomplished without "irrational migration processes."
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